



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Briefs: Weapons, drugs, cash taken from evacuees at KellyUSA

Web Posted: 09/07/2005 12:00 AM CDT

San Antonio Express-News

Weapons, drugs, cash taken from evacuees at KellyUSA

A sawed-off shotgun, handguns, narcotics and \$66,000 in cash were among the items confiscated from hurricane victims who arrived over the weekend at KellyUSA.

"We gave them the opportunity to get rid of (illegal items) before they went to the shelters," said Sgt. Gabe Trevino, spokesman for the San Antonio Police Department.

Evacuees were asked to dispose of the items in a large receptacle before they entered the relief shelter, but some did not.

"Some of those weapons weren't thrown in the trash can," Trevino said. "We actually found them in their possession as they were going through. What I know is it was a sawed off shotgun and several handguns. We recovered those. Some narcotics. Not significant amounts, but there were some small amounts."

Among the items confiscated was \$66,000 cash that a woman said was from a business she owned, according to Trevino.

"We recovered that. We're holding onto that for her," Trevino said.

San Antonio Express News

PAGE:

POSTED: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Air Force Times



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September 06, 2005

Air Force hurricane relief efforts soar in first week

By [Bruce Rolfen](#)

Times staff writer

In the first week after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the Air Force's role in relief efforts is at the least equal ongoing airlift efforts in the Middle East and Central Asia.

As of today, Air Force planes have delivered 9,179 tons of supplies to Katrina relief sites, according to officials. By comparison, Air Force planes moved 2,825 tons of cargo on intra-theater missions for U.S. Central Command during one recent seven-day span.

Overall, for Katrina missions, the Air Force has flown 3,532 flights. These included moving 20,816 passengers.

Air Force search and rescue helicopter crews picked up 4,600 people, while medical teams treated 5,500 people at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. Aeromedical evacuation crews helped fly out 2,600 patients.

The hardest hit Air Force installation was Keesler Air Force Base near Biloxi, Miss. Damage to the training base was so extensive that officials believe it won't be till March before classes can resume there.

In the meantime, the Air Force has evacuated most of the 2,700 students who had been taking classes at the base.

Airmen and their families who stayed at Keesler are living in dormitories and other base lodging facilities until their homes are structurally safe to return home to.

Basic services at Keesler are slowly being restored. For example, the base gas station has reopened but emergency generators are providing the base's electrical power supply.

Air Force Times

ISSUE DATE: 07 Sep 05

PAGE: 14



AETC News Clips

Air Force Times



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September 06, 2005

Troops search door-to-door for Katrina survivors

By Lolita C. Baldor

Associated Press

Rescuers have plucked tens of thousands of terrified residents from the rooftops of their homes in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, now the more difficult door-to-door scouring begins, and it could take weeks, if not months.

“I would like to believe that we are on the back side of this tremendous hump,” Air Force Maj. Gen. Marvin S. “Scott” Mayes, leader of the air component for the military task force operating in the hurricane-ravaged region, said Sunday. “But now comes the grunt work of the search and rescue, now we’re getting to the hard part. It will go on for some time.”

Mayes, in a telephone interview, said the military is now going door-to-door, by foot or by boat, in many of the harder to reach sections of New Orleans and more remote areas of Mississippi and the region. And he said he hopes it won’t take months.

Rescuers will “now have to find the people who have hunkered down,” he said, in what he called a continuing rescue mission — not yet simply a recovery of bodies.

Mayes, who is based at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., said Air Force units have evacuated more than 3,000 patients out of New Orleans International Airport — mostly on stretchers. He said crews also have shuttled more than 15,000 people out of the swamped region and flown in more than 4,600 tons of supplies.

Four major airports in Louisiana and Mississippi are open for military and other relief flights. But Mayes said it is far too early to tell when any of the commercial airports would be able to open for regular traffic.

Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., was severely damaged by the storm, but the airfield is open and repairs are being done so that the families of military members who lost their homes can stay on the base.

The Air Force has announced it will send 300 airmen, who are based at Keesler, home from Iraq and Afghanistan in the next two weeks, and nearly 100 more who were scheduled to leave Keesler for war duty will be staying home.

Air Force Times

ISSUE DATE: 07 Sep 05

PAGE: 14



AETC News Clips

Altus AFB, Okla.



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ALTUS HELPS WITH KATRINA RELIEF



JARED KALTWASSER/STAFF

Tech. Sgt. Scott Ballerstein, left, of the 49th Materiel Maintenance Group at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., helps load 145,000 pounds of cargo onto a C-5 Galaxy plane from Altus Air Force Base on Sunday morning. The crew from Altus was one of two planes that made deliveries to the hurricane-ravaged southeast United States earlier this week. The above cargo, including tents, generators and air conditioners, was delivered to the New Orleans Naval Air Station late Sunday evening where it will be used to set up a base camp for military personnel called to the region. For a full story on the trip, see this weekend's edition of The Sunday Constitution.

The Lawton Constitution

PAGE: 3A

DATE: 7 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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Air base hub for international aid

Posted on 9/5/2005 4:32:57 PM
by **Sandra Kirk**

Little Rock Air Force Base has been tapped as the hub and clearinghouse for all international air shipments of aid for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Word came from federal officials early Monday that aid flights from overseas would unload and distribute from the base in Jacksonville, northeast of the Arkansas capital, Lt. Jon Quinlan said. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose Little Rock as the central hub for international aid flights on the recommendation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Quinlan said.

The first aid flight arrived Monday afternoon from Great Britain. Boxes of supplies and ready-to-eat meals were unloaded from the African International Airlines DC-8, which had stopped in Gander, Newfoundland, to refuel.

"This is something Little Rock Air Force Base is equipped to handle and it's something we're excited to support," Quinlan said. "Taking on this cargo is very important and it's vital to the folks down in New Orleans and Mississippi."

The Little Rock base is one of the few in the mid-South equipped to handle large cargo planes and is a 7-hour drive to New Orleans. The Air Force contracted semi-truck drivers to drive the cargo to the Gulf Coast starting Tuesday. The base has customs officers and other screeners to review the goods and will store them overnight.

Little Rock Air Force Base is one of the largest C-130 cargo plane bases in the world and is the main U.S. training base for the aircraft. Quinlan said it already has most of the equipment and plenty of space to receive and process the deliveries and needed to hire only a few additional workers.

Quinlan said the air base was already supporting relief operations by flying 19 C-130s to Louisiana and Mississippi with aid and sent 24 airmen as a part of Joint Task Force Katrina.



AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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Little Rock Air Force Base Serves As International Hub

Monday September 05, 2005 5:49pm Posted By: [Mallory Hardin](#)



Hurricane victims are now starting to receive International help, and the help will be delivered through Central Arkansas. The Little Rock Air Force Base has been named the International Hub for aid going to Louisiana and Mississippi. The first aid flight arrived this afternoon from Great Britain.

Boxes filled with supplies and ready to eat meals were unloaded from the African International Airlines DC-8. The Little Rock Base is one of the few in the Mid-South equipped to handle large cargo planes.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

PAGE:

ISSUE DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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Foreign aid continues to arrive in Arkansas as evacuees move

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Ark. (AP) -- Thousands of evacuees packed Fort Chaffee as they arrived by the planeload from Louisiana, but Gov. Mike Huckabee said numbers were down to about 200 as refugees were bused to camps statewide.

The busing began as international aid flights into Little Rock Air Force Base continued on Tuesday.

"Chaffee is a great intake," Huckabee said in an interview. "It's not an ideal long-term place because it's such a large facility."

About 9,000 evacuees from Louisiana poured into Fort Chaffee from Saturday night into Sunday morning. Base officials said they could comfortably hold 4,000. On Tuesday, Huckabee said the refugees were being bused to camps around the state.

"We had space in these outer areas, so it just made sense for us to spread people out," Huckabee said.

In Jacksonville at the air base, relief supplies from Italy arrived on a C-5, C-130 and 747 along with Italian disaster relief officials. The planes were in addition to the first foreign aid, which arrived Monday at the base in a pair of flights from Great Britain.

The air base was tapped as the hub for international aid flights on Monday.

Agostino Miozzo, who works for Italian Civil Protection, said his government department deals with catastrophies all the time and now that the Italians would do whatever is necessary to help.

"We just know that nobody can face such a disaster alone," he said. Miozzo flew in a plane to Little Rock carrying food, water pumps, blankets and medical supplies.

Supplies from those two flights were unloaded and trucked out early Tuesday and taken to affected areas of the Gulf Coast. Base officials said that 15 planeloads of foreign aid are expected and 11 are confirmed.

Little Rock Air Force Base has flown 25 flight missions to areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina and 44.9 tons of aid have been delivered out of the base, officials said.

Meanwhile, the spouses of military personnel stationed at the Jacksonville base have banded together and gathered enough linens for 2,000 people and sent the sheets and towels off to Fort Chaffee.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
PAGE:
ISSUE DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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Sep 5, 5:56 PM EDT

Little Rock base receives first international Katrina aid

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Ark. (AP) -- The first international aid to Hurricane Katrina victims touched down in Arkansas on Monday as Little Rock Air Force Base was tapped as the hub and clearinghouse for all overseas air shipments for the disaster.

Word came from federal officials early Monday that aid flights from overseas would unload and distribute from the base in Jacksonville, northeast of the Arkansas capital, Lt. Jon Quinlan said. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose Little Rock as the main intake point on the recommendation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Quinlan said.

The first aid flight arrived Monday afternoon from Great Britain. Boxes of supplies and ready-to-eat meals were unloaded from the African International Airlines DC-8, which had stopped in Gander, Newfoundland, to refuel.

South African pilot Rob Waghorn stood in the DC-8's cockpit on Monday and said the 14-hour flight to bring aid to the United States was "a privilege, a good opportunity." Lt. Col. Dan Hicks said so far 15 flights are scheduled to come through the base with nine confirmed. Hicks said the Air Force expects six flights a day for the next two weeks. The first trucks to take the supplies to victims are expected Tuesday, with between 40 and 50 trucks expected each day.

French and Italian cargo shipments are expected to arrive Tuesday, base officials said.

"This is something Little Rock Air Force Base is equipped to handle and it's something we're excited to support," Quinlan said. "Taking on this cargo is very important and it's vital to the folks down in New Orleans and Mississippi."

The Little Rock base is one of the few in the mid-South equipped to handle large cargo planes and is a 7-hour drive to New Orleans.

The Air Force contracted semi-truck drivers to drive the cargo to the Gulf Coast starting Tuesday. The base has customs officers and other screeners to review the goods and will store them overnight.

Little Rock Air Force Base is one of the largest C-130 cargo plane bases in the world and is the main U.S. training base for the aircraft. Quinlan said it already has most of the equipment and plenty of space to receive and process the deliveries.

Quinlan said the air base was already supporting relief operations by flying 19 C-130s to Louisiana and Mississippi with aid and has sent 24 airmen as a part of Joint Task Force Katrina.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
PAGE:
ISSUE DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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Sep 7, 2:07 AM EDT

China to ship tons of relief supplies to Ark. for Katrina victims

BEIJING (AP) -- China prepared Wednesday to ship \$1.85 million worth of tents, bedding and generators to the United States to help victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The 100 ton shipment was loaded onto a cargo plane at Beijing's airport and was headed to Little Rock, Ark., said Wang Hanjiang, director of the foreign aid department of the Commerce Ministry.

"We are showing our sympathy in the face of such a disaster," Wang said. "We are showing the Chinese people's goodwill toward the American people."

Pallets of goods, which also included children's clothing, were expected to leave the airport Wednesday afternoon. They were wrapped in thick plastic and marked with the words "China donation" along with a picture of the Chinese flag.

Katrina hit the Gulf Coast last week, displacing hundreds of thousands of residents. The death toll has reached 294, although officials say it could rise into the thousands.

China said last week that it had offered \$5 million in aid. The Foreign Ministry had no immediate comment Wednesday as to whether the money had been sent.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

PAGE:

ISSUE DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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State braces for refugees

The Enid News and Eagle, Page 7

Saturday, 3 September, 2005

Staff and wire reports

Representatives from Enid social service agencies met Thursday to discuss whether the town could host storm victims chased out of the Gulf Coast because of Hurricane Katrina.

The overwhelming consensus was yes.

A day later, a new factor entered the challenge -- when.

"We've gone from the 'if' mode to the 'when' mode," said Allan McCobb, director of United Way of Enid and Northwest Oklahoma.

McCobb said it's inevitable Enid and communities throughout the Midwest will have storm victims arriving here requesting assistance.

"The feeling is there will be a lot more movement this weekend," McCobb said.

McCobb said he has talked extensively with Robin Unruh, director of Cimarron Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, about providing temporary shelter here.

"Our capacity might be up to 150," McCobb said.

A second Katrina Emergency Response Meeting has been rescheduled to noon Tuesday at the Enid Salvation Army.

Some storm victims already have arrived in Enid because of a relative at Vance Air Force Base.

Relocation manager Terri Presa, of Vance's Family Support Center, said she is receiving calls from other branches of the military, such as the Oklahoma National Guard, for assistance to victims.

Presa said vacant houses and beds are needed.

"We are asking landlords and owners to waive the first month rent," Presa said.

Enid's Salvation Army invites any storm victims, relatives and concerned people to its 11 a.m. Sunday worship meeting for a special time of prayer, said Capt. Cameron Henderson.

About 2,000 evacuees from Hurricane Katrina were expected to arrive at an Oklahoma National Guard training center by bus Friday, military officials said.

They were to be put in the barracks at Camp Gruber, about 18 miles southeast of Muskogee, said National Guard Lt. Col. Ronald B. Ragland.

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



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Vance AFB, Okla.



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"We're anticipating a pretty smooth transition here," Ragland said. "We've been planning for this. We understand their frustration."

Ragland said there were facilities at Camp Gruber to handle up to 5,000 evacuees, should this be necessary. He said the American Red Cross would help with the needs of the evacuees, and provisions were being made with restaurants and local vendors to feed them. He also said thousands of military MRE's, or meals ready to eat, would be available.

A doctor and several medics would be available, and a security force was in place.

"We're gearing up for anywhere from a one-week to a two-month stay," Ragland said.

The evacuees first went to Texas and then were loaded onto buses to come to Camp Gruber through an agreement among the governors' offices in Texas and Oklahoma and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said Paul Sund, a spokesman for Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry.

More evacuees were expected in Oklahoma.

"What the final number is, we don't know, but it obviously will be several thousand," Sund said.

More than 100,000 refugees of the hurricane that ravaged New Orleans are living in Red Cross shelters in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri and Florida and at the Houston Astrodome.

Officials at Red Cross chapters in Oklahoma City and Tulsa said about 300 refugees had checked in with them, but most found accommodations on their own with friends and relatives.

Ragland said he and others at Camp Gruber understand the evacuees have had a difficult time.

"We understand they could be short-fused if you will," he said. "We will welcome them and be kind, understanding and supportive."

Some of the hurricane refugees who trickled into a Tulsa shelter Friday said they had lost everything.

More than 30 beds were available in a Red Cross shelter at the Crosstown Church of Christ in Tulsa. About 10 evacuees were there Friday morning, snacking on pastries and learning how they could get clothes and other help.

A week from her 59th birthday, lifelong New Orleans resident Cheryl Thomas sat in a denim dress, clutching her purse -- all that she has left -- and spoke of starting her life over in a place far from home.

She evacuated ahead of the storm Sunday and is staying with her son and daughter-in-law in Owasso. She hasn't heard from another son who lives in New Orleans. And she can only imagine the devastation to her home near the Superdome.

"I know I lost everything," said Thomas, who came to the shelter hoping for help refilling her heart medication and getting an Oklahoma identification card. "I have nothing. Thank God I have life."

Henry declared a state of emergency to make it easier for the state to respond to the relief effort. The declaration relaxes state purchasing laws, making it easier to supply state emergency officials who are offering help.

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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He also asked President Bush to declare a federal disaster for Oklahoma to free up federal funds to assist with feeding and housing the evacuees and cover overtime costs to local and state government.

The state was sending 2,500 National Guard members to the hurricane-damaged area and about 1,000 other emergency workers.

"Oklahomans always step up to the plate when people are in need, and if there has ever been a time to step up to the plate, it is now," the governor said.

Ricky and Kim Hamilton came to the Tulsa shelter looking for financial help in renting a mobile home, which they plan to park in Broken Arrow where a cousin has been giving them shelter.

They're pretty sure their house in Metairie, La., is gone, since it backed up to Lake Pontchartrain, which breached its levees and flooded New Orleans.

They fled Sunday afternoon with just a few changes of clothes, leaving behind a cat and treasured family photos. They ran out of cash just as they reached Broken Arrow and because their Louisiana bank cards don't work, they can't get more.

"We're having to depend on the kindness of strangers," Ricky Hamilton said.

Now, the couple, who are in their mid-40s, are talking about settling down for awhile, looking for work, "even if I have to flip hamburgers at McDonald's," Kim Hamilton said.

They don't know when they can go back. They don't know if they want to go back.

"I don't know if I could do that again," Kim Hamilton said, shaking her head gravely.

Staff writer Scott Fitzgerald and The Associated Press contributed to this story.



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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Sponsors make students feel more at home

The Enid News and Eagle, Page 3

By Jeff Mullin Senior Writer

It's a long way from places like Milan, Italy, and Kano, Nigeria, to Enid, and not only in terms of miles.

In order to help international pilot training students at Vance Air Force Base adjust to life in their temporary new home, Vance International Military Student Flight and a group of local volunteers have formed a sponsorship program.

Under the International Student Sponsor Program, volunteer families sponsor one or more international students during the 13 months they will train at Vance.

The goals of the program are to make the international students feel welcome, to acquaint them with the American way of life and to cultivate goodwill between the United States and the students' home nations.

Student pilots have little free time, which makes it difficult for Vance officials to show them what life in Enid is like, said Capt. Jon King, International Military Student Flight commander.

"It's hard for us to find time to do anything with them," said King, "so we started this sponsor program. Sponsors can have them over for dinner, take them out to sporting events, pretty much anything they want to do, to try to bring them out into the community a little bit more so they learn more about the United States than just Vance Air Force Base."

Vance once had a similar program, but it has not been in effect for several years. King has revived it with the help of volunteer Mary Feightner, who is in charge of matching students with sponsors.

"We've just gotten the sponsors all signed up and linked up with the students in the past couple of months," said King.

The program is so new many of the sponsors have yet to have contact with their adopted students.

Feightner said she has had no trouble matching all 12 international students currently studying at Vance with local sponsors.

"We wanted a family to adopt them to kind of show them the community and our way of life here in Enid and help them to get acquainted with the American culture," she said.

John and Traci Anderson, both of whom were once Air Force officers, are sponsors for the two Portuguese students at Vance. They were scheduled to have one of the students over for dinner Friday, while the other was out of town. They were involved with the international student program while serving at Vance.

"We really enjoy getting to know people and learning about their culture," said John Anderson, who owns Golf USA.

Tom Andrew, of Andrew Real Estate, is sponsoring one of the Italian students at Vance.

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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"When I show people around Enid I enjoy giving a tour and talking about the history," he said.

Jim Harris and wife Peggy have been involved with hosting visiting physicians through the Rural Health Program, so the Vance international student sponsor program seemed a natural fit for them.

"It will be enjoyable to get to know people from different countries," said Jim Harris, with Baker-Harris Insurance. "The older you get, the more you realize you don't know what you need to know about these other countries."

Mike Riddle of Bank of Kremlin is sponsoring a student from Kuwait.

"That will be fascinating. It's an area of the world that is in the news," he said. "I think it will be good to give them an opportunity to see America through our eyes."

The program still needs volunteers. Anyone interested in sponsoring an international student pilot from Vance should call Feightner at 233-4913.

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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International students learning to fly at Vance

The Enid News and Eagle, Page 1

Sunday, 4 September, 2005

By Jeff Mullin Senior Writer

As a T-38 instructor pilot at Vance Air Force Base, Capt. Jon King trains young students to fly the military's high-tech fighters featuring the most up-to-date weapons systems.

But it is an ancient weapon, hanging on the wall of his office, that brings a smile when a visitor inquires about it.

It is a bronze sword, adorned with a crimson tassel, a gift from a Pakistani student.

Besides being an instructor pilot and Vance's T-38 wing scheduler, King also holds the title international military student flight commander.

Vance currently has 12 students from other countries -- eight from Italy, two from Portugal and one each from Kuwait and Nigeria.

Vance's International Student Office is part of the Foreign Military Sales program that manages U.S. government sales of weapons and other defense articles, defense services and military training.

"When Italy, say, buys F-16s from the United States," said King, "as part of that package of buying those F-16s they'll ask that we train pilots to fly those F-16s."

Purchasing aircraft is not a requirement for another country to have pilots trained in the United States. Other nations simply can pay to have their pilots trained through the Foreign Military Sales program.

Perhaps the program's primary goal, said King, is to promote international goodwill.

"We're hoping that the people that we train here will go on to bigger and better things in their country and that they will come away from their experience here with a positive impression of the United States," said King.

Some nations are eligible for International Military Education and Training (IMET) grants that will pay to train students from that country.

"Countries in the IMET program are countries that we want to develop diplomatic ties with, but they can't afford to send their students to pilot training," said King, "so the U.S. will subsidize part of that training for them, and it will be cheaper for those countries."

Before international students arrive at Vance, they spend three months at the Defense Language Institute in San Antonio polishing up their English. Soon after they arrive at Vance, King gets them enrolled in flight training.

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

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Then it's a matter of introducing the international students to their American classmates.

"They (the Americans) can kind of take them by the hand and make sure they get to everything they need to go to, initially," said King. "Usually after about the first week or so you can't tell the difference between them and any other pilot training student."

The international students undergo the same training, and must meet the same requirements, as American students. Most international students progress through primary training into the T-38, because they will fly fighter jets when they return to their countries.

Two of Vance's international students, 2nd Lts. Ida Casetti and Donatella Caforio, are two of the first female graduates of the Italian Air Force Academy.

"You are required to learn and be proficient very quickly," Casetti, a native of Milan, said of the rigors of Vance's Joint Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training program.

She said their classmates have been "very helpful and friendly."

"Especially in the beginning when we had more difficulties," said Casetti.

Their American classmates have helped them study but also have helped them cope with the pressures of pilot training.

"It's hard to have to study, but we can also have fun," said Casetti, "to take some moments to joke and laugh."

Their American classmates, said Caforio, also include them in out-of-class activities, providing an opportunity to "relax together, to go out, to have some fun."

The biggest adjustment international students have, King said, is being so far from home.

"When we get the students, they've already been in the country for three months," said King, "so a lot of their adjusting has been done when they are down at language school. So when we get them here they are fairly well adjusted already."

King wears a lot of hats as the head of the international student flight commander. He says he has to be a counselor, a mentor and a big brother.

"It's a lot of that," he said, "trying to help them out as much as I can so they can get through pilot training. A lot of it is interacting with the other agencies on base, people who would come into contact with international students, so if they know nothing else when they come into contact with an international student, they know to contact me, and we can figure out how to get done whatever they need."

King deals with any issue regarding international students. But since he took over the international student program in January, he said there have been no major problems.

"There haven't been a lot of issues," he said. "I think that's probably from being proactive and going out and kind of greasing the wheels so people know there are internationals here and they can get in contact with me if they need to."

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

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King is a decorated combat veteran who earned the Bronze Star with a "V" device for valor for his actions in Afghanistan in 2002. King was a forward air controller and directed an airstrike on an al-Qaida position, saving an American special forces unit from an ambush.

His present job is radically different, but it is satisfying, King said.

"The best thing about this job for me is probably just meeting the students and talking to them," said King. "I get to find out all about their countries, how they are different from the U.S. It gives you a completely different perspective on your job and the United States."

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

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Family finds refuge in Enid after fleeing Hurricane Katrina's wrath

The Enid News and Eagle, Page 1

Saturday, 3 September, 2005

By Scott Fitzgerald Staff Writer

Stephanie Gelvin, of St. Bernard, La., which is located southeast of New Orleans, and her family knew what to do before Hurricane Katrina struck early this week.

They planned an evacuation, packing their things in the family sports utility van and joining the bumper-to-bumper mass exodus out of the Gulf Coast region.

The Gelvins' four-vehicle caravan, which included cousins and other relatives, headed west to Dallas.

They arrived in Enid on Tuesday at Vance Air Force Base, where Gelvin's sister, Staff Sgt. Josie Fellows, serves in the security forces squadron.

The Gelvins are safe. They are adjusting to their new environs. Gelvin interviewed for a job with Garfield County Juvenile Detention Center on Friday.

Nevertheless, they remain shocked at the abrupt change in their lives. They wonder about relatives left behind, their friends and their St. Bernard home that is now long gone.

"We were totally submerged in water. We lived in a manufactured home. I didn't think it (Katrina) would be that bad. We lost everything," Gelvin said.

Gelvin's husband, Rusty, is a deputy with the St. Bernard Parish Sheriff's Office. He remained behind to assist with local rescue efforts. He also injured his knee during those rescue efforts.

"FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) told him, 'Sorry, we can't do anything for you. You're on your own,'" Stephanie Gelvin said angrily.

Rusty Gelvin evacuated to Baton Rouge. His brother, Keith, of Houston went and got him. Keith is going to pay Rusty's airline ticket to Oklahoma City so he can reunite with his family in Enid.

"My husband was overwhelmed by what he saw in the aftermath of the storm. He said everywhere he looked, he saw dead bodies. He's very emotional," Gelvin said.

Gelvin talked to him early Friday, the first time since they separated early Sunday.

Her twins, 2-year-old Ansley and Taylor, just celebrated their birthdays. Both, along their 4-year-old sister, Taylor, and grandmother Martha Sylvera, accompanied Gelvin in her vehicle on the trip. Other cousins and relatives, nine in all, were part of the family caravan.

Rusty and Stephanie Gelvin had planned a birthday party for the twins exactly a week ago today. Instead, they sat down and outlined a plan of evacuation.

Enid News & Eagle

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 07 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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Stephanie Gelvin is making the most of an opportunity to begin a new life here.

She's grateful for the benevolence shown in Enid -- Hope Outreach and Salvation Army have donated necessities, Oklahoma Department of Human Services in Garfield County got her emergency food stamps and Garfield County Health Department provided the kids free immunizations so they can enroll in Enid Public Schools.

Gelvin can't help but wonder about what she's left behind, including her grandfather, Craig Sylvera, who works for the St. Bernard Parish water board.

"All I could do when I first arrived here was cry. My daughter kept asking if Dad was dead. I wish I could get some sleep. All I want to do is watch the news," Gelvin said.

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